



## Federal Emergency Management Agency

### James Lee Witt: FEMA Director

James Lee Witt was appointed by President Clinton and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency in April 1993. He was the first agency head who came to the position with experience in emergency management, having previously served as the Director of the Arkansas Office of Emergency Services for four years.

As FEMA Director, Mr. Witt coordinates federal disaster relief on behalf of President Clinton, including the response and recovery activities of 28 federal agencies and departments, the American Red Cross and other voluntary agencies. He also oversees the National Flood Insurance Program, the U.S. Fire Administration and other pro-active mitigation activities that reduce loss of life and property from all types of hazards. Mr. Witt administers budgetary resources of \$7 billion and oversees 2,500 employees located in Washington, D.C. and 10 regional offices. In 1997, Mr. Witt started Project Impact, a national initiative to help build disaster resistant communities through education, mitigation and public and private partnerships.

Since taking office, Mr. Witt has led FEMA through more than 176 Presidentially declared disasters in some 3,655 counties in all 50 states and territories, including the most costly flood disaster in the nation's history, the most costly earthquake, and a dozen damaging hurricanes. He reorganized FEMA into a pro-active customer-focused agency recognized by President Clinton and Vice President Gore as a model for successful government. The agency has received increasing public accolades and specific honors in recent years, including, in 1996, the Innovations in American Government award from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University. In February 1996, President Clinton elevated Mr. Witt to cabinet status — a first for a FEMA Director.

Mr. Witt's professional career includes the formation of Witt Construction, a commercial and residential building company. After 12 years as a successful businessman and community leader, he was elected County Judge for Yell County, serving as the chief elected official for the county, with judicial responsibilities for county and juvenile court. At age 34, he was the youngest elected official in Arkansas, and was honored for his accomplishments by the National Association of Counties. After being re-elected six times to the position, Mr. Witt was tapped by then-Governor Bill Clinton to assume leadership of the Arkansas Office of Emergency Services.

A native of Arkansas, Mr. Witt has been nationally recognized for his work in emergency management, environmental health, earthquake mitigation and veterans affairs. He was charter Board Chairman of Child Development Incorporated, an organization dedicated to advancing Head Start programs for children.



**James Lee Witt**

#### **FEMA Fax-on-Demand Service**

Distributed by the FEMA  
Office of Emergency  
Information and Media Affairs

24-hour Fax-on-Demand:  
(202) 646-FEMA  
All other inquiries:  
(202) 646-4600